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Letter dated 18 October 1999 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the text of a position paper of the Chinese delegation entitled "Uphold the ABM Treaty, Push forward Nuclear Disarmament Process and Promote International Peace and Security" (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 76.

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Annex

Uphold the ABM Treaty, Push foward Nuclear Disarmament Process and Promote International Peace and Security

-- *Position of the Chinese Delegation*

The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) represents the corner stone for maintaining global strategic balance and stability in the world today. Over the past 30 years or so, it has helped bring about a relative balance and stability among the state parties by limiting the development and deployment of ABM systems for a defense of the territory of the state party. During the Cold War, the Treaty played a pivotal role in checking the nuclear arms race between the United States and the former Soviet Union which would otherwise have got out of control. Now in the post-Cold War era, the Treaty, by providing for restraint between state parties to develop and deploy anti-ballistic missile systems, makes possible the bilateral reduction of nuclear arms by the United States and Russia, and furnishes the necessary security framework required for movement on the multilateral nuclear disarmament front. Although the Treaty is bilateral in nature, its important role in maintaining global strategic stability, pushing forward nuclear disarmament and promoting international security has been universally recognized.

The ABM Treaty is, however, now confronted with grave challenges flowing from some recent negative developments in the international situation. In seeking its own absolute security and strategic advantage, a state party to the Treaty is now not only vigorously pursuing its own NMD programme but also pressing rapidly ahead with its joint TMD development programmes with some other individual countries. Such moves not only fly in the face of the purposes and principles of the Treaty, but are also very much at odds with the core provisions of the Treaty. It is thus clear that the real motive behind the repeated requests of

the above-mentioned state party to amend the Treaty is to remove the legal barriers to legitimize its development and deployment of NMD system. It is certain that once an amendment is made to the Treaty, there will be many more to come as a result of the so-called changes in situation. And, ultimately, the Treaty will be virtually rendered ineffective and become mere pieces of paper. This should naturally arouse the vigilance and grave concern of the international community.

To amend the Treaty in pursuit of NMD will have wide and far-reaching adverse impact on a global scale.

Firstly, such a move will have severe negative impact on global strategic balance and stability.

As the ABM Treaty has, since its conclusion, served as the corner stone for the maintenance of global strategic balance and stability, to amend this Treaty in pursuit of NMD will tip global strategic balance, trigger a new round of arms race and put world and regional stability in jeopardy.

The past century has demonstrated that the security of one country is often subject to that of others. A country can only enjoy its genuine security when it is built on the common security of all other countries. The basis for security should be the mutual trust and shared interest of all countries. A certain individual country, with its economic prowess and scientific and technological advantage, has vigorously pursued NMD, and, far too frequently, used or threatened to use force in international affairs in a bid to seek its own absolute security and military superiority. Such a practice will do no good to the relaxation of international situation. On the contrary, it will only undermine global strategic balance and stability and deprive all other countries of their sense of security as this country builds its own security at the expense of that of others. In a world where every country feels insecure, all countries will naturally seek all possible means to protect themselves as military factor plays an even greater role in international relations. As a result, large amounts of financial and material resources would have to be put into military build-up, which could otherwise be devoted to economic development. If that were the case, who would feel secure, and how could the world ever be a stable place to live?

Secondly, such a move will seriously hinder the nuclear disarmament process.

The relative balance of forces among major powers in the world and the global strategic stability based thereon represent the precondition for nuclear disarmament. If such balance and stability were shattered, the nuclear disarmament process would come to a halt or even be reversed.

The mutual restraint among state parties to the Treaty in developing and deploying anti-ballistic missile systems has created the necessary condition for the reduction of offensive strategic weapons and thus provided the guarantee for further progress in nuclear disarmament. It is with this Treaty, coupled with progress in a series of START negotiations that we have brought about the indefinite extension of the NPT, the conclusion of CTBT and the understanding pertaining to FMCT negotiations. To pick up the pace of the nuclear disarmament process, the international community should maintain such a momentum. However, if certain country is bent on making substantive amendments to the Treaty with a view to legitimizing its deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems, the precondition for strategic stability will then no longer be there and the security environment will undergo major changes. Under such circumstances, who can guarantee that existing treaties will continue to be implemented and, the existing understandings, still stand? And who can guarantee that the negotiations we are to embark on will still proceed smoothly?

Nuclear disarmament will be impossible in the absence of an international environment of peace, security, stability and trust. Development and proliferation of sophisticated missile defense systems will, obviously, do no good to international nuclear disarmament endeavour. On the contrary, it will only poison the atmosphere,

undermine the conditions necessary for nuclear disarmament, and breed a potential danger of arms race on a higher level. The nuclear disarmament process between the U.S. and Russia is already at a standstill with uncertain prospects for multi-lateral nuclear disarmament. Against this backdrop, international community should even more be resolute in their pursuit of the ultimate goal of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. Once nuclear weapons are eliminated, there will be no nuclear proliferation, let alone proliferation of long-range missiles and missile threat. So, in the final analysis, to exert greater efforts at disarmament per se, instead of otherwise, represents a correct approach, if we are to reduce the threat to peace. Under the current situation, it is imperative that attempts to amend and undermine the ABM Treaty be checked so as to preserve its integrity and effectiveness. This is of utmost importance to maintaining the momentum for nuclear disarmament and pushing forward nuclear disarmament process.

Thirdly, such a move will also disrupt international non-proliferation efforts.

Nuclear disarmament constitutes the prerequisite for non-nuclear states to honor their commitment to stay non-nuclear. To amend the ABM Treaty will legitimize the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems. If such attempts were to prevail, the prerequisite and basis for nuclear disarmament would no longer be there. Under such circumstances, who can guarantee that yet some other non-nuclear states will not go nuclear? The use of large quantities of missiles by some military powers in Kosovo represents ample evidence of missiles' effectiveness and military prowess in today's world. It is, in effect, the best "publicity and promotion campaign" for this type of weapons. So, in this sense, we are of the view that countries which are the loudest advocate for missile non-proliferation are exactly the ones who have actually aggravated missile proliferation.

Moreover, given that the technologies for missiles and anti-missiles are inter-related and mutually convertible, many of the technologies used in anti-missile systems can be adapted to develop and improve offensive missiles. In this context, to develop anti-missile systems will, instead of checking missile proliferation, only add to the dangers of missile proliferation and thus make MTCR even more ineffective.

With the above in view, China maintains that it is the responsibility of the international community to take every necessary step, including, inter alia, calling for full and strict compliance with the ABM Treaty by all state parties, to preserve the integrity and effectiveness of ABM Treaty and to ensure that the Treaty will remain as the cornerstone for maintaining global strategic balance and stability and promoting nuclear disarmament. It is both fitting and timely for the General Assembly to review this issue at the current session, since it may, according to the *Charter of the United Nations*, discuss any questions pertaining to the maintenance of international peace and security brought before it by a Member or non-Member of the UN. It is absolutely necessary for the General Assembly to do it. To amend the ABM Treaty will affect the security of the entire international community, as such a move undermines global strategic stability and balance with severe negative impact on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation endeavour. The draft resolution entitled "Preservation of and Compliance with the ABM Treaty"tabled by the Russian Federation is aimed at helping maintain international peace and security. The General Assembly, therefore, has both the right and obligation to discuss the above mentioned important issue as reflected in the above draft resolution. China, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, will, together with all other countries, seek the widest support and strive for its adoption at the current session of the General Assembly.